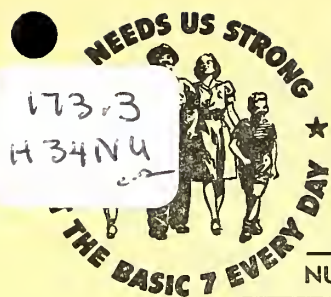


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NUTRITION

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NUTRITION ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Since October 24 is the fifth anniversary of the date the charter of the United Nations became effective, we are including in this issue a resume of reports by United Nations agencies of their nutrition activities.

Regional Nutrition Conference

Latin American nutrition problems were examined and recommendations for action made at a meeting in Rio de Janeiro in June, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). Twenty governments were represented by official delegations with technically trained persons from FAO, WHO, and 13 of the countries. In addition observers were present from Argentina and nine international organizations including United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). About 60 persons attended the meeting.

The agenda provided for consideration of (1) current nutrition problems of the region and the progress achieved since the 1948 meeting in Montevideo; (2) practical measures for improving nutrition, including supplementary feeding, nutrition education, nutrition programs in public health departments, and programs of national institutes of nutrition; (3) methods of research in food and nutrition; and (4) special topics, such as foods important in correcting dietary deficiencies, endemic goiter, and nutrition in technical assistance programs.

Most of these broad subjects had received attention at the 1948 meeting, and it was clear that the recommendations of the earlier conference had influenced subsequent action in many countries.

The complete report of the Second Conference on Nutrition Problems in Latin America will be published by FAO. In an

informal report of the conference to the Interagency Committee, Dr. H. K. Stiebeling who headed the U. S. delegation indicated the trend in thinking on some of the points included in the final recommendations, as follows:

Feeding of Special Groups. In feeding infants and young children the importance of safe milk was stressed, and also the need of supplementing milk with nutrition-wise formulas or food combinations that make full use of local and generally available foods.

Concern was expressed both for finding ways to provide supplementary feeding for children not attending school and for increasing the effectiveness of school feeding programs. It was pointed out that school meals should fit into the cultural pattern in such a way as not to displace important home meals; that school lunch facilities and experiences should be used as a part of the educational endeavor; and that precautions should be taken to insure wholesomeness of food, its sanitary handling, and the health of food handlers.

Strong recommendations were made for improving both adequacy of workers' meals and food service conditions. Special measures have to be developed to accomplish these objectives in areas remote from cities, as in mining areas or on plantations.

Throughout the discussions the refrain recurred that the families of persons receiving special aid must be considered, and programs must be organized so as not to interfere with normal family life and responsibility.

Nutrition Programs in Rural Areas. To expand nutrition work beyond the cities, it was recognized that specific measures were needed such as: (1) Making available seeds, fertilizer, and equipment to encourage home production of food; and (2) give basic training in nutrition to local teachers, nurses, public health workers, and agricultural leaders.

Need for Strong Leadership in Nutrition. Attention was again called to the great need for qualified nutrition leadership in Government and in institutions of higher education.

Improving Methods in Nutrition Research. Need was emphasized for specially trained personnel to help improve techniques involved in diet studies, in clinical and biochemical assessment of nutritional status, and in analysis of the composition and nutritive values of food, looking to eventual adoption in various countries of methods that are basically similar. Agreement was reached regarding certain key data to be given priority in collection of information when personnel is limited. It was suggested that FAO could facilitate exchange of information on methods for various types of food and nutrition research.

Endemic Goiter. Special attention was given to the problem of providing the iodine needed to prevent endemic goiter. ("WHO Nutrition Program in 1950." See below.)

Point IV Program. Since a well nourished and healthy population is required to carry out plans for economic development, the need for two types of technical assistance under this program was emphasized: (1) Training of nutrition personnel within the region as well as through fellowships for study abroad; and (2) regional demonstrations by missions showing how to increase food production, to conserve food in storage, and how to make use of foods in kind and quantities needed for adequate diets.

FAO Nutrition Activities

Dr. W. R. Aykroyd, Director of the Nutrition Division of FAO, writes that the Division—

- ..Collects and analyzes information for the benefit of FAO as a whole and for its member governments, with special reference to relating food production policy to nutritional requirements;
- ..Undertakes international studies of subjects such as school-feeding, nutrition education, and techniques of dietary surveys;
- ..Provides direct assistance to member governments within the limits of its resources.

Assistance to Member Governments. Activities in this category have a broad geographical distribution. Aid was given Greece in establishing permanent nutrition services, and arrangements have

been made for the staff member who performed this task to work in Turkey toward the same objective. Similar assistance, but more limited in extent, was given to Portugal and Finland.

In the Near East special attention has been given nutrition problems in Egypt. After a joint survey early in 1950 by the directors of nutrition activities of FAO and WHO, a report on "A Nutrition Program for Egypt" was prepared for the Egyptian Government. In order to develop nutrition work in the Near East a training course for technical workers of various kinds is being held late in 1950 in Cairo.

At the request of the Government of Thailand, a nutrition officer was sent to that country to help develop a program of nutrition education. Thailand does not suffer from shortage of food, but considerable improvement in diet can be brought about by teaching the people how to make better use of foods that are or could easily be made available.

The Division is collaborating with the Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama in making diet surveys to supply basic information needed in attacking problems of nutrition in this region. (December NNL). Recently an FAO officer participated in a nutrition workshop in Puerto Rico, attended by people from different territories in the Caribbean, at which practical measures for dealing with nutrition problems in the area were considered. Field activities will be considerably extended under the Technical Assistance for Economic Development Program (Point IV). Many requests for assistance through this program have already been made by member governments.

Regional Conferences. The convening of periodic nutrition conferences and committees in the different regions is a useful method of encouraging and coordinating nutrition work. Two such meetings have been held in the Far East and two in Latin America. (The most recent of these is described on p. 1.)

WHO Nutrition Program in 1950

Nutrition activities of WHO cover a wide field but emphasis this year is on two problems—endemic goiter and problems of feeding infants and young children in underdeveloped countries—according to Dr. F. W. Clements, Chief of the Nutrition Section of WHO.

Goiter Prevention. Numerous surveys in the past 25 years have defined the extent of endemic goiter in the United States. In many underdeveloped countries, however, the extent is not known at the present time. WHO has assisted by sending a consultant to Ceylon to make a survey, and to report to the Government on the extent of endemic goiter and measures for its prevention. Another survey revealed the incidence of goiter in parts of Central and South America. Earlier WHO had sent a circular letter to member governments requesting information on endemic goiter. From the replies to this questionnaire, the reports of the surveys, and from scientific articles, a fairly complete picture of the incidence of endemic goiter in the world has been drawn up.

Iodized salt has been used with success in the endemic goitrous regions of the United States, England, the Continent of Europe, and New Zealand, as well as in other countries where free-flowing table salt is in common use. At the suggestion of WHO, research is now under way to find ways of iodizing the crude salt commonly used in underdeveloped countries. Until this problem is solved, it will not be possible to launch a full scale program to prevent endemic goiter in these areas.

Foods for Infants and Young Children. In underdeveloped countries satisfactory formulas are needed for feeding infants after weaning and for young children. In many areas no form of milk is available in sufficient quantities at prices most of the population can afford.

Experiments in a number of countries have already shown that formulas for young children after weaning can be developed from cereals, legumes, and fruit. While these formulas may not be exactly comparable to those based on cow's milk, they provide a much better diet than many infants and young children in underdeveloped countries now get.

WHO is stimulating further study of this problem by qualified agencies in underdeveloped countries and elsewhere.

UNICEF in Latin America

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund writes that it has helped to provide a cup of milk each day over the past 3 years for between 4 and 6 million children in Europe and the Middle East. Now the Fund is giving emphasis to projects in Latin America

and Asia that, it is hoped, can have a permanent place in health and welfare services for children.

In these areas the milk, meat, margarine, and fish-liver oil which the Fund provides are used in demonstrations to teach parents and others the fundamentals of good nutrition. The work being done in British Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua provides an example of the procedure followed in this new phase of UNICEF aid, where the governments of the countries, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, and the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama are working together.

Three related programs are under way: A demonstration program in schools and maternal and child health centers; diversification of agriculture to make necessary types of food generally available; and control of malaria and other insect-borne diseases.

The governments carry the administrative responsibility and contribute local supplies and services. UNICEF provides milk and other protective foods as well as DDT, sprayers, and transport for the insect-control programs. WHO, FAO, and the Institute give technical assistance.

These United Nations-assisted programs in Central America—and a similar program in the Philippines—are not large, nor are they dramatic, but they mean much to the people concerned, according to the UNICEF report. These countries have had only a few school-feeding programs and the number of maternal and child health centers is limited. Facilities have to be set up, workers trained, supplies kept coming steadily in, and the people have to be convinced of the value of what is being offered.

Yet, difficult as this many-sided venture is, it is all being managed somehow. The children are being fed in the schools and mothers are bringing their babies to the clinics as fast as they can be established. The farmers are learning new ways. And teams are traveling from house to house spraying the walls and ceilings with DDT, a service which all understand, for the spraying is to keep them free of the sickness which up to now has been an accepted part of their lives. The teaching goes on, day by day, by every means possible, through the schools, the churches, the clinics—where there are clinics—the doctors, the town officials and, perhaps most important of all, the children themselves.

UNESCO's "Food and People" Program

When the Food and People Project of UNESCO was launched by the U. S. National Commission for UNESCO last spring (JUNE NNL) one of the first steps was to prepare discussion materials and distribute them for the use of many organizations in the United States.

Among these the National Educational Organization was one of the first to organize a program. Shortly after the Food and People Educational Campaign was begun this teachers' group called a conference to examine the discussion materials. NEA representatives heartily endorsed the program and worked out practical suggestions for teacher cooperation. A representative of FAO was invited to make a major address at a NEA summer seminar in St. Charles, Mo., where classroom teachers gathered from all parts of the United States and several foreign countries to get new ideas in teaching international relations. Subsequent discussion groups considered such timely aspects of the Food and People problem as nutrition and health, food and peace, population and resources, increasing food production, and Point IV programs.

American Home Economics Association in supporting the Food and People Project will foster increased understanding of international problems and cultural differences in food habits by promoting available materials such as those of FAO and UNESCO, and by preparing additional materials.

The American Association of University Women, General Federation of Women's Clubs, and civic clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis as well as colleges and universities are giving leadership in many places.

Educational departments of several labor unions are among other organizations actively engaged in bringing Food and People facts to membership attention.

Agricultural leaders are emphasizing the world-wide implications of Food and People in discussions with rural groups, and serving as resource people when lay organizations need technically trained panel members.

Church groups of many denominations are delving into the subject by means of

local study programs often preceded by leadership training conferences.

A growing number of State and local UNESCO Councils, World Affairs Councils, and active chapters of the United Nations Association are taking steps to enlist cross-organizational interest in community-wide discussions on Food and People.

New Materials

Available from UNESCO Relations Staff,
U.S. Dept. of State, Washington 25, D.C.

The UNESCO Story. A Resource and Action Booklet for Organizations and Communities. (112 pp., illus., 1950.) A limited supply is available to group leaders. Additional copies may be procured from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., for 55 cents each, with a 25 percent discount on orders for 100 or more.

Available from United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 405
East 42d Street, New York, N. Y.

UNICEF. A Compendium of Information about the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund: Its Origin and Development; Policies; and Operations in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa. 1950.

Available from International Documents
Service, Columbia University Press,
2960 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition. Report on First Session. (WHO Tech. Rpt. Series 16, 24 pp., 1950.) 15 cents a copy.

Food Composition Tables for International Use. (FAO Nutr. Studies No. 3, 56 pp., 1949.) 75 cents a copy.

Dietary Surveys: Their Techniques and Interpretation. (FAO Nutr. Studies No. 4, 108 pp., 1949.) \$1 a copy.

Calorie Requirements: Report of the Committee on Calorie Requirements, Washington, D. C., 12-16 September 1949. (FAO Nutr. Studies No. 5, 65 pp., 1950.) 75 cents a copy.

Teaching Better Nutrition. (FAO Nutr. Studies No. 6, 192 pp., illus., 1950.) \$2 a copy.